



February 20, 2007

Two are sentenced in six-kilogram cocaine seizure

A federal judge has sentenced **Oscar R. Sandoval-Espana** and **Manuel A. Mendez-Herasme**, both of Pawtucket, to federal prison for trafficking in six kilograms of cocaine. Drug Enforcement Administration agents seized the cocaine from a safe in a car last May.

United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente announced the sentences, which U.S. District Court Judge William E. Smith imposed during separate hearings in U.S. District Court, Providence. On February 2, Judge Smith sentenced Sandoval to ten years in prison, and, on February 16, he sentenced Mendez to 70 months.

Both defendants, whose ages are not reflected in court records, pleaded guilty in November to possessing with intent to distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine. At the plea hearings, Assistant U.S. Attorney Sandra R. Beckner said that the government could prove that, on May 24, DEA agents, acting on information that they had received, set up surveillance outside a home on Mulberry Street, Pawtucket. When they saw a black sedan, driven by Mendez, pull out of the driveway, they followed it. Sandoval then followed the agents' car in a pickup truck. When agents pulled the sedan over, they also gestured for Sandoval to pull over.

Inside the sedan, agents found a safe, to which both Sandoval and Mendez had keys, and inside the safe, agents found packages containing a total of six kilograms of cocaine. Subsequent testing revealed Mendez's fingerprints on the bag containing the cocaine.

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